

Message Text

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15

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FM AMEMBASSY TANANARIVE

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C O N F I D E N T I A L TANANARIVE 1044

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, MA

SUBJECT: MALAGASY MILITARY TRIBUNAL ACQUITS KEY POLITICAL FIGURES

1. ON JUNE 12, FOLLOWING DEFENSE SUMMATIONS AND TWO HOUR'S DELIBERATION, MALAGASY MILITARY TRIBUNAL ANNOUNCED ITS VERDICT IN TRIAL OF 33 ALLEGED ASSASINS AND CONSPIRATORS INVOLVED IN KILLING OF HEAD OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT COLONEL RATSIMANDRAVA FEBRUARY 11. COURT FOUND ONLY THREE LOW-RANKING DEFENDENTS GUILTY OF PARTICIPATION IN ASSASSINATION, ALL OF WHOM WERE FROM REBEL POLICE UNIT AND APPREHENDED AT SCENE OF ATTACK WITH WEAPONS. THESE THREE WERE SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS HARD LABOR AND HEAVY FINES. ALL OTHERS WERE ACQUITTED - "PURE AND SIMPLE" AS MAD PRESSE PUT IT. VERDICT WAS REPORTED TO PUBLIC ON EVENING NEWS BROADCASTS JUNE 12 FOLLOWED BY NATIONWIDE SPEECH BY GENERAL ANDRIAMHAZO. ACQUITTED INCLUDED FORMER PRESIDENT TSIRANANA, RESAMPA, COLONEL RABETAFIKA, AND COLONEL RAJAONARISON.

2. GENERAL CALLED FOR PEACE AND FRATERNITY, AND FOR MALAGASY "TO TURN TO FUTURE" NOTING THAT PUBLIC ALREADY HAD CALMLY GONE THROUGH DIFFICULT PAST MONTHS. GENERAL ALSO SAID THAT MILITARY DIRECTORY DID NOT INTERFERE WITH TRIBUNAL AND HAD NOT EVEN REVIEWED DOSSIERS. ANDRIAMHAZO SAID THAT TRIAL WAS CHARACTERIZED BY THREE MAIN POINTS: (1) LIBERTY OF JUDGES; (2) FACT THAT PROSECUTORS REPRESENTED PEOPLE; AND (3) RESPECT FOR RIGHTS OF ACCUSED.

3. EMBASSY COMMENTS: IN STRICTLY LEGAL TERMS, VERDICT
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STRIKES US AS ONLY ONE POSSIBLE IN ABSENCE OF HARD EVIDENCE LINKING BULK OF DEFENDENTS TO ASSASSINATION. IN POLITICAL SENSE, MERINA ARE LIKELY TO DISCREDIT GENERAL ANDRIAMHAZO'S STATEMENT OF NON-INVOLVEMENT BY MILITARY DIRECTORY AND TO

SUSPECT THAT COTIERS ON DIRECTORY, NOTABLY RATSIRAKA, IMPOSED
VERDICT ON TRIBUNAL FAVORING COTIERS. IN TANANARIVE,
RATSIRAKA'S NAME IS ALREADY LINKED TO AMNESTY GRANTED TO
200-ODD LESSER DEFENDENTS MAY 15. TANANARIVE REMAINS CALM
AND WIDELY ANTICIPATED NEW SECURITY MEASURES BY MILITARY
DIRECTORY HAVE NOT BEEN IMPOSED. PUBLIC ATTENTION HERE IS
ALREADY BEGINNING TO SHIFT FROM TRIAL TO SPECULATION ON
ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW GOVERNMENT.
ELFERS

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